

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD NIACT IMMEDIATE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC (SIMONS, LEWIS H.)

SUBJECT: WHEREABOUTS OF WASHINGTON POST CORRESPONDENT,
LEWIS H. SIMONS

1. SUMMARY. FOREIGN EDITOR OF THE WASHINGTON POST, RONALD KOVEN, CALLED DEPARTMENT AT 6:30 P.M., LOCAL TIME, TO INFORM US THAT WASHINGTON POST WAS CONCERNED OVER WELFARE OF THEIR CORRESPONDENT SIMONS. KOVEN REPORTED THAT THEY HAD LAST HEARD FROM SIMONS AT MIDNIGHT WASHINGTON LOCAL TIME AND WOULD APPRECIATE DEPARTMENT'S CHECKING WITH EMBASSY. END SUMMARY.

2. ACCORDING TO KOVEN, SIMONS HAD BEEN ASKED BY THE PAKISTANI INFORMATION MINISTER TO APPEAR AT THE LATTER'S OFFICE ON THE MORNING OF JULY 12 REGARDING A STORY THAT SIMONS HAD FILED TO GO VIA COMMERCIAL TELEX. SINCE SIMONS DID NOT GET A COPY OF THE STORY, HE ASSUMED THAT THE TELEX SYSTEM WAS OUT OF ORDER, SO CALLED THE WASHINGTON POST TO DICTATE HIS REPORT. EVIDENTLY, TRANSMISSION OF STORY HAD BEEN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HELD UP BY PAKISTANI AUTHORITIES. SIMONS' REPORT APPEARED IN THE POST ON THE MORNING OF JULY 12 UNDER CAPTION "PAKISTANI GENERAL PICTURED AS RELUCTANT COUP LEADER." THE FIRST PARAGRAPH STATES: QTE SECRET PAKISTANI ARMY DOCUMENT REVEALS THAT GENERAL MOHAMMED ZIA AL-HAQ, WHO SEIZED POWER

IN A COUP LAST WEEK, EXPRESSED STRONG OPPOSITION TO TAKING

THE DRASTIC STEP. END QTE. THE DOCUMENT TO WHICH SIMONS ALLUDES WAS REPORTEDLY WRITTEN ON MAY 7, AND SIMONS CONCLUDES THAT QTE THUS, JUST TWO MONTHS, ALMOST TO THE DAY, BEFORE HE SEIZED POWER AND ANNOUNCED THE END OF THE BHUTTO GOVERNMENT, ZIA TOLD HIS SUBORDINATES THAT THE ARMY HAD NO BUSINESS INVOLVING ITSELF IN POLITICS, BUT MUST OBEY ORDERS. END QTE. FULL TEXT OF STORY BEING SENT SEPTTEL.

3. SIMONS TOLD POST THAT WHEN HE INFORMED THE INFORMATION MINISTER THAT THE STORY HAD BEEN DICTATED VIA TELEPHONE, THE INFORMATION MINISTER SAID THAT THIS WAS A VERY SERIOUS MATTER AND CONSTITUTED A VIOLATION OF SECURITY AND THAT SIMONS MIGHT BE QUESTIONED FURTHER REGARDING HIS STORY. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE WASHINGTON POST SUGGESTED THAT SIMONS LEAVE THE COUNTRY IMMEDIATELY.

4. POST LAST SPOKE WITH SIMONS AT THE INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL AT MIDNIGHT WASHINGTON LOCAL TIME, JULY 12, I.E., EIGHTEEN HOURS AGO, AND WOULD APPRECIATE ANY INFORMATION THE EMBASSY CAN PROVIDE ON HIS WELFARE.

5. OBVIOUSLY, HOLDING AN AMERICAN JOURNALIST WOULD BE TAKEN VERY SERIOUSLY HERE, AND WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT APPROPRIATE REPRESENTATIONS WOULD BE MADE BY THE EMBASSY SHOULD THE SITUATION WARRANT. VANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
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Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
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Sent Date: 12-Jul-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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Litigation History:
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